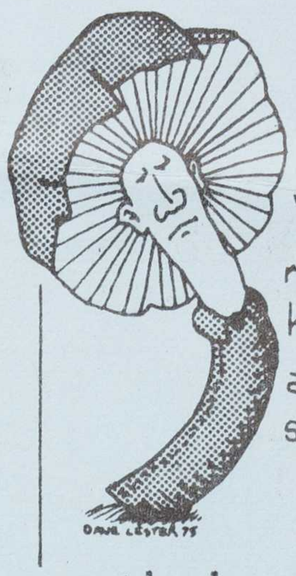
HSH INMATES SUPPORT ALLIANCE ACTIONS



"I must be a mushroom because people keep me in the dark and keep feeding me shit."

Haverford State Hospital inmates ("patients") have shown their continuing support for our exposure of and battle against psychiatric oppression at that institution. We at the Alliance for the Liberation of Mental Patients have always counted several Haverford inmates and/or ex-inmates among our membership.

Haverford inmates have maintained contact with the Alliance through letters, phone calls, and attendance at Alliance meetings. They have supplied us with a constant flow of information concerning the torturous conditions and daily violations of inmates' human and legal rights. They've told us of consistent heavy drugging with powerful psychiatric "medications," the regular use of leather restraints and seclusion (solitary confinement), and beatings by several of the psychiatric aides/guards at Haverford. Inmates have also requested and received much literature and information concerning the Alliance and our work.

When Lenny Lapon, an ALMP member, was fired from his job as a paralegal at Haverford on March 16 for openly criticizing "hospital" conditions, forced drugging, and commitment (railroading) procedures, Haverford inmates demonstrated their support by circulating a petition protesting his firing. The petition read: "...along with the patients of Haverford State Hospital all would like to have Lenny Lapon back with us here at the American Bar Association Project (ABA)...We all honestly feel that he was fired unfairly and unjustly..." Within a few days, 59 inmates had signed the petition. In addition, on March 20, the Haverford Patient Government, a body elected by "patients" to make their concerns known to the staff and administration, unanimously passed a resolution calling for Lenny's reinstatement.

When members of the Alliance attempted to distribute "patients'" rights literature at Haverford on April 17, several inmates met us at the front gate. They met us despite the fact that Haverford administrators arranged bus trips for inmates which coincided exactly with our 1:00 arrival, despite urgings of the staff not to come down to the gate, and despite the presence of the Pennsylvania State Police and the Haverford Security Police. (Details of this confrontation appear elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Following are some comments from inmates and former inmates at Haverford State Hospital:

"...they put me in restraints...I laid in the bed for 3 days. I laid in my own urine for over 7 hours before getting a shower or a change of sheets...the hospital courtroom here is a kangaroo court unless you have a paid attorney. I deeply appreciate what the Alliance for the Liberation of Mental Patients is trying to do about this."

"I was brought to court...the doctor stood up on the stand and made a list of my faults that were all lies, and gave me a five month sentence to Haverford State Hospital, at the end of which time they killed my spirit with the help of phenothiazine drugs."

"I'm in agreement with you about Thorazine and Prolixin...they are bad news and should be taken off the market immediately and not used on mental patients!"

"Since my time in Haverford State Hospital, I have gone through extreme terror. The epitome of authoritative derision against the unknown "mental illness" is practiced here. I have been screamed at, demands are constant; rules and regulations cloud the real problems that exist in one's attempt at mental health. I have been drugged with terrifying physical and mental results. I have learned to suffer in silence with unexplainable pressure in my head. Thoughts and ideas have been warped through forced drugging. I believe there is no such thing as treatment here--just constant aggravation of the human beings' civil rights. I have virtually been thrown through the so-called court so many times, watchings the manipulations of lies and deceit which have no proper place in our enlightened society. I would hope there would come a day when this hospital will not have the legal right to exist. Until then, there are many who suffer the disastrous effects of forced commitments and forced drugging..."

"Every time I decided to leave my husband he paid psychiatrists to label me "mentally ill." I was railroaded into Norristown and then into Haverford State Hospital. I was continually treated by doctors and judges as "incompetent" even though I have always been intelligent, competent as a teacher and artist, and perfectly able to make decisions for myself. It seemed that all they wanted to do was beat me down more and more. Something should be done about these kangaroo courts and mental prisons, and the sooner the better!"